

Santa Barbara County Public Works Department Flood Control & Water Agency

California Department of Water Resources
Attn: Lauren Bisnett, Draft GSP Emergency Regulations Public Comment
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236

March 25, 2016

RE: Comments on the Draft GSP Emergency Regulations

Lauren Bisnett:

The Santa Barbara County Water Agency we would like to thank DWR for the opportunity to submit comments on the Draft Emergency Regulations for Groundwater Sustainability Plans.

Santa Barbara County is the CASGEM entity for the San Antonio Creek and Cuyama Valley Groundwater Basins and will be forming GSAs in both of these basins in the coming months. In addition, the County will have a role in working with the majority of low and medium priority basins in the County including the Goleta Valley Groundwater Basins, Santa Barbara, Montecito, Carpinteria Valley and Santa Ynez Valley, all of which will be moving forward with GSA formation and ultimately GSA development.

AS DWR is aware, SGMA encourages the formation of <u>local</u> groundwater sustainability agencies for the purpose of implementing the SGMA requirements including the development of groundwater sustainability plans. Given that SGMA highlights the importance of local control and because Santa Barbara County is the chief local authority in a number of basins as well as having an active role in many other basins county wide, we have been following the State's process closely and are keenly interested in ensuring GSP regulations are transparent, reasonable and useful for all entities. To these ends, we have prepared the following comments on the Draft Emergency Regulations for Groundwater Sustainability Plans.

1. As discussed above, SGMA was drafted with the mandate of local control and local authority. Likewise, DWR has emphasized the importance and need for local development and local control. Therefore, during the DWR's review of locally developed GSPs, DWR must grant GSAs the freedom to start implementing the plans as soon as possible in order to most quickly and successfully obtain sustainability goals. While the County understands the need

for review and approval, the timeline associated with DWR's review process is protracted and will leave GSAs vulnerable and unable to act on the Plans and implement projects in a timely manner so as to best support the sustainability goals of the local GSA, DWR and ultimately the goals of the State.

- In the interest of precious time and resources, the requirement for use of the NAVD88 datum should only be mandated if it is readily available to the GSA. In many instances, historical data and studies are based on older datum and until new (and costly) surveys are conducted, older datum, such as 1929 datum are perfectly sufficient to meet the required needs.
- 3. The Draft Regulations do not clearly mention cost recovery for the GSPs and implementation, nor is there any reference on compliance with 218, which will undoubtedly impact the ability of agencies to endure the costs of the program. New legislation would be able to clarify this and require the following:
 - All new and existing wells to have meters;
 - Required reporting as a requirement of utilization of groundwater;
 - Adoption of legislation that clearly exempts assessment of pumpage from any previous regulations.
- 4. The Regulations must address reconciliation of water rights and associated issues as these relate to affected property owners and potential actors who refuse to meet the set target. SGMA states that water rights will not be affected, hence the Regulations must elucidate how this is the case and how this will be implemented.
- 5. DWR must be more responsive to local issues and local authority in providing latitude with plans and projects. Not only is local control a theme of SGMA, but it is truly the only way to ensure that groundwater basins are sustainably managed.

Again, that you for the opportunity to comment; Santa Barbara County remains dedicated to working with DWR proactively on this and other issues that impact our shared water resources.

Sincerely,

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Santa Barbara County Water Agency

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